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“Finding the Courage of Conviction”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had an inspirational dream that left a lasting impression on the hearts of the American people. This was a dream he preached to hardened hearts and closed minds, in an attempt to have people open their eyes, and visualize his dream too. That dream was unity. That dream was equality. That dream was love.

There are many of history's heroes in our lives that we fail to understand the importance of. Sure, we flip through the pages of our history book and recognize their brave actions and the impact they had on society, but we rarely stop to think about these people and their teachings in everyday life. This is how I felt about Martin Luther King Jr. until recently. I understood what a great man he was, but nothing ever happened in my life that made me take his teachings to heart. I couldn't see how it affected me.

“Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.”-Martin Luther King Jr. I frowned when I first heard that quote, that was me.

Then an unexpected situation comes up, something so hateful and hurtful that it makes you physically ill, and Wham! His words suddenly make sense. Not only what he said, but what he meant when he said it. Racism and hate weren't just affecting some random person on the other side of the country; racism and hate were hurting my friends, poisoning the minds of people I once respected, and tearing through the halls of my school. That's what happens when you stop and open your eyes, you begin to see.

(Catherine Cramer continued)

With my new found inspiration I stopped to think. Now that I know how I feel, what can I do to help? There are many contributions that a United States citizen *should* seek to make, and many actions a citizen *should* feel an obligation to carry out. These actions, however, lack conviction. These are not contributions we make because of moral obligation, but rather, the times we just go through the motion thinking only of how we are perceived by others.

“We are called to be people of conviction, not conformity; of moral nobility, not social respectability. We are commanded to live differently and according to a higher loyalty.”-Martin Luther King Jr. So, the real test to me would be, what could I do, as a moral person, to continue the beliefs that I so valiantly preach? Standing up to racism, was what I could do. Gulp, not quite as easy as it sounds. When people around me are making racial slurs, should I let it go, or say something? When my friends pick on kids not necessarily because of race, but just because they’re different, would I have the courage to make them stop? When the “in clique” decides it might be funny to make someone cry or exclude the outsider, could I stand up to them? I could try. My contribution could be my will to try, and where there is will there is a way. I will seek unity, equality and love. I find this difficult, because in truth, doing what’s right is rarely popular. I’m just a fifteen-year-old girl, doing the little things I can on a daily basis. But could I really make a difference?

“Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted.”-Martin Luther King Jr. Creatively maladjusted? Hmm. . . maybe there was some hope for me after all, and if there’s hope for me, there’s hope for us all.

(Catherine Cramer continued)

Unity, Equality, Love. Take a moment and really think about these words, how they affect you, and how contributing a little more to these ideas could affect someone else.